

Vulgar burglary by ordinary robbers was safe and easy during this summer. Men who saw the year of mutiny in India declare that, as fast as the news of the outbreak at Meerut flashed along the great trunk road, thousands swarmed out against their neighbours, not to overturn the British rule, but to plunder and amass wealth during the abeyance of authority. So it was in England in 1381.

By June 10 the home counties were ablaze from end to end and the peasants were marching on London. A few days later the villagers and townsfolk throughout East Anglia had overturned law and order in those parts.¹ Day after day riot spread as the news travelled. It broke out in Somersetshire on the 19th, and in Yorkshire on the 23rd, though by that time the rebellion at the centre had spent its main force and was fast being put down ;² so far was the Eising from being everywhere simultaneous. That no resistance was made to the first outbreak of rebellion, was the more discreditable to those in authority, since the disturbed state of the country had been long recognised. The reason, however, is not far to seek. There was no force specially trained and reserved for police duty. Neither was there a standing army. An expedition equipped for France was lying at Plymouth embarked. The leaders did not perceive the importance of the crisis. It would perhaps have been hard to expect them to disembark on their own initiative. ' Fearful lest their voyage should be prevented, or that the populace, as they had done at Southampton, Winchelsea, and Arundel, should attack them, they heaved their anchor and with some difficulty left the harbour, for the wind was against them, and put to sea, when they cast anchor to wait for a wind.' ³

Thus deprived of the only organised force then ready, except Percy's Border-riders in the distant North, the government had no means to put down the rebels, until there had been time to call out the nobles and gentlemen with their retainers, who were at present peacefully scattered through the land in their manors and castles. This the King's council

¹ Powell. • *C. R. It.* 503, Rex.
 12 (Bev. 283); *C. B. R.* 500, Rex. 13 (Rev. 253).
 * Froiss., ii. 466.